

The Chronicle and Index

OF THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY.

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[For Gratuitous Circulation

THE Rev. J. C. Street begs to acknowledge, with thanks, the receipt of the following contributions in aid of the publication and gratuitous circulation of the *Chronicle and Index*. A Friend, 5/-; Mrs. Brydon, 2/6; Mrs. J. Watson, Gosforth, 10/-; G. B. Dalby, Preston, 5/-; E. G. David, Hamburg, 5/-; A Friend, 1/-.

Further contributions for the same purpose will be duly acknowledged.

It will be seen from our advertising columns that Mr. Minot J. Savage's valuable book, entitled: "Christianity, the Science of Manhood," has been republished in England, as the first of a series of Modern Hand-Books of Religion, at the small price of One Shilling. We owe this enterprise to the energy and perseverance of the Rev. Henry M'Kean, of Oldbury, who has long felt the need of a series of books setting forth in clear, strong, and effective manner, the distinctive principles of Religion, in such a way as shall meet the needs of the people of to-day. The first book of his series is a valuable one, and will be read with deep interest by all who are concerned with a rational presentation of Religion. Mr. Savage's book is fresh, vigorous, and manly, and will undoubtedly prove very useful. We commend it to our friends. It may be had at the Depository for ninepence per copy.

THE Mutual Improvement Association which meets in Rosemary Street, has begun its session under most favourable and prosperous circumstances. The opening soiree was a brilliant success, and gave great pleasure to the numerous friends who were present; and the Papers, Discussions, and Lecture have excited much interest among the members and friends of this Society. It is pleasant to know that new members are being steadily added to the Society, and that its work increases in value.

THE Sunday Evening Lectures at Rosemary Street, have been resumed by the Rev. J. C. Street, and the attendance has been large and encouraging. The subjects already treated by Mr. Street have been: "Opening Vistas;" "New Heretics and Old Heresies;" "The

Working Classes and Christianity." And on Sunday, October 28th, the Rev. T. Dunkerley, B.A., gave an interesting lecture, entitled: "A Glimpse of Mahomedanism," which we gladly print in our present issue.

WE learn that the Rev. J. J. Wright has received and accepted an urgent and unanimous invitation to the ministry at Netherend, Cradley, as colleague to the Rev. Wm. Cochrane. Mr. Wright will be greatly missed at Mountpottinger, and in the North of Ireland, and will carry with him to England the good wishes of a large number of Irish friends.

THE twenty-third annual meeting of the Scottish Unitarian Christian Association was held in the St. Vincent Street Unitarian Church. On Monday evening, Oct. 22nd., the business meetings took place, when the reports of the committee were submitted and a conference held. The report stated that there had been few years in the life of the Association which had been marked by so many efforts in so many directions to make known their liberal theological doctrines as the past year. The Macallan bequest had given the committee the means to do the work of the association with greater confidence, energy, and independence; and the earnestness with which that work was now carried on proved that with increased opportunities for work increased activities would appear. The association was therefore a living force, the sphere of whose activity was only limited by the scanty means at its disposal. The report then referred to the appointment of the Rev. Christopher J. Street, M.A., as Theological Lecturer for the association in Scotland. The committee hoped that this lecturer's well-known energy and ability would succeed in reviving the Paisley Church, and in spreading over the country the enlightened gospel of Unitarianism. Reference is made to the success of the Sunday evening religious services for the people, which were held in the South Side during the month of May. At the election of office-bearers, the Rev. F. W. Walters was unanimously elected president for the ensuing year; Mr. John Virtue, Treasurer; and Mr. W

J. Milligan, Secretary. On Wednesday night the annual soiree was held in the church, which was tastefully decorated with plants and flowers, tea being served by young ladies of the congregation. On the platform were the Rev. F. W. Walters, president; Rev. T. W. Freckleton, of London; Rev. Henry Ierson, M.A., representative of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association; Revs. R. B. Drummond, B.A., Edinburgh; H. Williamson, Dundee; A. Webster, Glasgow; C. J. Street, M.A.; G. T. Walters, Aberdeen; also Rev. J. C. Street; and R. M'Calmont, Esq., as representing the Belfast Unitarian Society: Rev. T. W. Scott, Lochmaben; Messrs. Brownlee, A. L. K. Gilchrist, Balantyne, M'Quaker, Reid (Paisley), &c. The church was well filled, though the weather was inclement. Tea having been served the Chairman gave an address of welcome to the Rev. Christopher J. Street, M.A., who has just been appointed lecturer to the association. In the course of an able address, he congratulated Mr. Street on his recent appointment, which he might term the Unitarian Bishopric of Scotland. Mr. Street was the worthy son of a worthy sire, and the field of labour upon which he was just entering was both an extensive and a noble one, as no bishop in the country presided over a wider diocese than that to which their young friend had been appointed. Scotland's deepest religious life, the speaker proceeded to say, was all on the Unitarian side. A religious transition was going on, and Scotland itself was unconscious of the great reformation which was taking place in her so-called orthodox churches, and nobler and juster views of God were taking now the place of the harsh Calvinism which was so popular as recently as fifty years ago. He concluded by extending the hand of welcome to Mr. Street, wishing him every success in his work. The Rev. Mr. Street briefly replied. In the course of his remarks he said that Glasgow, which should be the most religious city in the empire, showed the very lowest percentage of a church-going population, only 17 per cent or 27 per cent—he was not just sure what was the figure, but it was a painfully low one. He did not much wonder at that though, when they had such flaming divines amongst them as the Rev. Robert Thomson, whose extraordinary irreligious and unclerical conduct had been so fully reported during the past few weeks. He had already, he further said, entered upon his new field of labour on preaching last Sunday evening in Paisley, and

the reception accorded him had been such as to make him hope for the best results. Addresses were afterwards given by the Rev. T. W. Freckleton (London), Rev. R. B. Drummond, Rev. H. Williamson (Dundee), Rev. H. Ireson, M.A., Rev. G. T. Walters, Rev. A. Webster, and by Rev. J. C. Street, Mr. M'Calmont, and others. The proceedings were varied during the course of the evening by the very tasteful rendering of appropriate solo and anthem exercises by the church choir. Votes of thanks to choir and ladies, and to the chairman, closed the proceedings, which were of a most interesting and engaging nature throughout.

THE Rev. J. C. Street and Mr. R. M'Calmont had a most cordial reception as the representatives of the Unitarian Society of Belfast, at the recent meeting of the Scottish Unitarian Association, in Glasgow, and were assured of the deep interest felt in Scotland, for the progressive work done in connection with the Belfast Society. The interchange of courtesies and representatives between the two Associations which has continued for many years passed, has brought about the most happy relations between the men and women on both sides of the water, who are striving to spread liberal views of religion in the two countries.

EARLY in July last an invitation of the Provincial Assembly of Lancashire and Cheshire was sent to the Rev. James Martineau, LL.D., D.D., asking him to visit Manchester. Dr. Martineau's reply will be read with interest:

"DEAR FRIENDS,

"If my will were of rock, your letter would melt it down. Never were more persuasive influences brought into one appeal than it sets before my thoughts;—surviving friendships, that must be severed soon; tender memories of lost associates and past toils; the inspiring sight of a young generation, freshening the old scenes and outstripping the aims and labours of their fathers; an audience predisposed to listen once again to a long-silenced voice;—what more can I need to win my assent to your earnest request that I would revisit you in Manchester?

"Alas! it is not *more* that I need,—rather is it *less*,—to make it possible. The cup is already too full. Did your expressions of confidence and affection not so deeply move me, did I not know that the occasion would overwhelm me by intensity of interest, I should perhaps have courage to stand before you and say my parting word.

"But, believe me, it is impossible. Though old age deals very gently with me, neither visiting me with bodily infirmity, nor sensibly affecting my quiet work

in the study and the lecture-room, it has relaxed the once steadfast nerve of self-command, and leaves me helpless on the waves of any deep excitement. Hence I have no longer a right to accept a post of exceptional exposure and trust, but must be content, like many a veteran before me, to perform some garrison duty among the unseen defenders of the citadel of God.

"Moreover, through my eager interest in the studies assigned to me and my desire to keep pace with their continual growth, I have too long shrunk from gathering up the fruits of past years, and throwing into final form such parts of my life-work as may be allowed to survive me. Now that I am at length deeply engaged in this task, it becomes evident that, without absolute concentration upon it, I cannot hope to save it from dying with me. Whether, in that case, it would be missed, no one can feel more doubt than I. But, as it is my only apology for having lived, you will not wonder that I feel bound to consecrate to it the eventide of my years, and guard it from even the most winning of diverting appeals.

"Such an appeal, most assuredly, is yours. And were my appointed day's work done, and a few unpledged hours and an adequate remnant of strength at my disposal, it would be a true privilege and joy to spend a portion of them among you, in the stirring scenes and amid the dear associations of my earlier ministry; and it would take more prudence than I have learned to hold me back.

"As it is, the considerate kindness and sympathy with which your excellent representatives, Messrs. Dowson and Rawson, listened to my plea for declining your affecting invitation, encourage me to hope that my reasons will meet a like appreciative reception from the general body of their constituents, and will be mistaken by no one for the excuses of indolence or indifference. Though I cannot personally rejoin the goodly company of the venerable Provincial Assembly, the precious volume (itself a marvel of the Illuminator's and Copyist's art) which preserves the story of their invitation, will remain for my children, as for myself awhile, among the most sacred memorials of my life.

"I remain, always, with grateful affection,

"Yours faithfully,

"JAMES MARTINEAU.

"THE POLCHAR, ROTHENMURCHUS, AVIEMORE.

"September 22, 1883."

A GLIMPSE AT MOHAMMEDANISM.

LUKE IX. 49, 50.

It is sometimes thought that the expression, "Casting out devils" means no more than "Converting the heathen." So understanding it in this passage, we have an utterance worthy of a great soul, and a sentiment that may well guide us, when we turn from our own *isms* to criticise the beliefs of others. With Jesus, let us see in the professors and teachers of other forms of religion, not adversaries, but co-workers, who, if they follow not us, yet are labouring for the same noble end.

The Arabs have a proverb to the effect, that the children of Shem are prophets; the children of Japhet are kings; and the children of Ham are slaves. The Arabs and the Jews are of this prophetic race, and from them have sprung the three great Monotheistic forms of religion—the Jewish, the Christian, and of the Mahomedan. There appears to have been in the Semitic mind an instinct towards Monotheism. And although Arabia had, in the early centuries of the Christian era, no national existence—consisting of a number of tribes, constantly plundering and making war upon each other; although the prevailing religion was a low form of idolatry; yet there were minds seeking for higher and better conditions. We are told of members of the tribe of Koreish resolving to war against idolatry, and to seek the original and only true faith; and they "straightway abandoned their homes, and spread over the world in the quest of this Holy Grail."

Both the Jewish and the Christian faiths were to be found in Arabia, and in seeking the form of religion that might elevate his fellow countrymen socially and religiously, Mohammed's attention would naturally be turned towards them. These, however, existed in debased forms.

Mohammed knew something of Judaism, but he accuses the Jews of having lost sight of their primary truth, in calling Ezra the Son of God. The shortest Sura in the Koran, but the one which Mussulmans value, as equal to a third of the whole, is this: "Say, there is one God alone—God the eternal; He begetteth not, and He is not begotten; and there is none like unto Him." Mohammed had also seen something of Christianity; but the worship of saints and images, a religion, the essence of which was not a holy life, but "an unthinkable mode of thinking of the Trinity," repelled rather than attracted him. The Koran says: "they surely are infidels who say God is the third of three (v. 77), for there is no God but one God." "Say not three; forbear, it will be better for thee; God is only one God." (iv. 6). He regarded Christ as the greatest of the prophets; but denied that he ever claimed to be the Son of God, or still less, to be equal with God. "It becometh not a man that God should give him the Scriptures, and the wisdom, and the spirit of prophecy, and that then he should say to his followers, 'Be ye worshippers of me as well as of God,' but rather 'Be ye perfect in things pertaining to God, since

ye know the Scriptures, and have studied them.' " So, likewise, as the fierce barbarian, King Clovis, when he received his first lesson in Christian life, the death of Jesus, exclaimed, " If I and my brave Franks had been there, we would have avenged his injuries;" or rather, as the old Cumberland woman, when she was told for the first time the story of the crucifixion, said, " It is so long ago, let us hope that it is not true." Mohammed would not believe that Jesus could have been crucified, but held that at the resurrection Jesus would himself testify against both Jews and Christians; the Jews for not having received him as a prophet, the Christians for having received him as a God.

Moreover, in Mohammed's view, Christianity had been tried and failed. It had been known for 300 years in Arabia, and had not been able to overthrow, or even weaken, the idolatry of the inhabitants.

Patiently did he nurture his thoughts of reform until his 40th year, when, as tradition says, in a lonely cave he saw an angel in human form, but flooded with celestial light, and displaying a silver roll. " Read," said the angel. " I cannot read" said Mohammed. The injunction and the answer were twice repeated. " Read," at last said the angel, " in the name of the Lord who created man out of a clot of blood; read, in the name of the Most High, who taught man the use of the pen, who sheds on his soul the ray of knowledge, and teaches him what before he knew not." Upon this, Mohammed felt the heavenly inspiration, and read the decrees of God, which he afterwards promulgated in the Koran. Then came the announcement. " O, Mohammed, of a truth thou art the Prophet of God, and I am His angel Gabriel."

Recounting this vision, in trouble of soul, to his wife, who said, " fear not, for joyful tidings dost thou bring. I will henceforth regard thee as the prophet of our nation. Rejoice," she added, seeing him still cast down, " Allah will not suffer thee to fall to shame. Hast thou not been loving to thy kinsfolk, kind to thy neighbours, charitable to the poor, faithful to thy word, and ever a defender of the truth?"

Then came a long period of trial when men mocked at him, and pointing the finger of scorn as he passed by, said: " there goeth the son of Abdallah, who hath his converse with the heavens." His sensitive soul was stung within him, and life was a burden to him. At length

out of humiliation came victory. Calling together the heads of the great tribe of Koreish he boldly announced his mission. They offered him honours and wealth if he would desist from preaching. He replied, " should they array against me, the sun on my right hand, and the moon on my left, yet while God should command me I would not renounce my purpose."

Driven from Mecca, he took refuge in a cave with a single companion. Koreishite pursuers scoured the country, thirsting for his blood. They approached the cave. " We are only two," said his trembling companion. " There is a third," said Mohammed, it is God Himself." The pursuers reached the cave. A spider, it is said, had woven its web across the mouth, and they, deeming the solitude of the place unviolated, passed on. The Mohammedan era appropriately dates from this event—the *Hijrah*. There is nothing more sublime than this confidence in God.

Such was the founder of that religion which lifted up Arabia out of the dust, which spread like a deluge, or a devouring flame over Syria, Persia, Asia Minor; which crossed into Africa and Europe—that remarkable religion of which I obtained a glimpse, a few months ago, as it exists in the Empire of Morocco, in North Africa.

Much attention has been directed of late years to that " dark continent," by travellers and conquerors, by traders and missionaries, soldiers, and philanthropists. And to us, Christians, it is humbling that although Christianity was planted there eighteen centuries ago, and although Christian missionaries continue to be sent there, yet good authorities tell us that the only religion that is making marked progress among its dark skinned children, is Mohammedanism.

This fact, together with what I knew of the introduction of that religion into this African continent made me gaze with peculiar interest upon the signs and emblems of a faith having an origin so remarkable,—a faith professed by 150 millions of my fellow men, members of the same great human family, and children of the same Heavenly Father, though they call me Infidel, and the child of Satan. I called to mind that this vast region of North Africa had once seen professedly Christian, but as I recalled certain specimens of its Christianity, I refrained from thinking it an example of a lower faith supplanting a higher. I wondered whether Christianity in its simplicity and purity was

ever destined to irradiate that dark continent, and whether it might not be the mission of Islam to win the abject devotees of fetichism and idolatry to monotheism, as preparatory to the acceptance of none but the purest Christianity.

Very early in the public career of the Prophet of Mecca, some of his persecuted followers were forced to fly to Abyssinia for refuge. Questioned as to the cause of their flight, by the king, they replied: "We were plunged, O king, in the depth of ignorance and barbarism; we adored idols; we knew no law but that of the strong. Then God raised up among us a man of truthfulness, honesty, and purity. He taught us the unity of God; he ordered us to abstain from sin, to offer prayers, to give alms, to observe the fast. We have accepted his teaching. For this reason our people have persecuted, tortured, and injured us, until, finding no safety among them, we have come to thy country and hope thou wilt protect us from their oppression." The king gave them the protection they prayed for.

Not many years later, the Mohammedans came to Africa in a very different character,—not as supplicants, but as conquerors. Egypt, the ancient Kingdom of the Pharaohs, the land of mystery and old-world civilization, fell before their arms. The renowned cities and fortresses of North Africa were captured one by one, being offered the choice of the Koran, Tribute, or the sword. And one adventurous general, Akbah, led his victorious army through this very Kingdom of Morocco, unto the western shores, spurring his charger into the waves of the Atlantic, until they rose to his saddle-girths; "Oh Allah!" cried the zealous Moslem, "did not these profound waters prevent me, still farther would I carry the demands of 'thy law, and the reverence of thy holy name.'" Such was the enthusiasm which brought the Moslems to this part of Africa, where the continent protrudes boldly to meet the Continent of Europe. After the capture of Tangier, the advancing strangers soon crossed into Spain, in which country they maintained themselves for seven centuries.

The greatness of the Moors has passed away. Driven from Spain, they long proved a terror to the maritime countries of Europe, by their bold piracies. But now, even this remnant of their ancient enterprise no longer exists. Yet they cling to their religion with a devotion—a fanaticism scarcely paralled elsewhere.

As in so many parts of our world, the most remarkable buildings in Tangier, are those erected for religious purposes,—the Mosques, of which there are five or six. All form picturesque objects, are ornamented with a mosaic of coloured tiles, with arched door-ways, and tall minarets pointing to the skies. A small gallery runs round the minarets, near the summit, from which at certain times of the day, the Muezzin calls the faithful to prayer. The interiors of the mosques, two of which seem to be large, are jealously protected from the prying eyes of Jew or Christian; the crossing of the threshold, by whose intruding foot would be the signal for bloodshed on the part of the fanatics. Nowhere in Islamdom is there an exclusiveness so rigid. Stories abound of the massacre of Jews for drinking at a sacred fountain, for touching the tomb of a saint, and for other trifling violations, as they seem to us, of religious decorum. But there is nothing that arouses the bad passions of men's hearts more strongly than the tenets they term religious.

The Ramadan, the month of abstinence, instituted in commemoration of the "40 days" fast of the prophet, is observed with great strictness in Tangier. During the month, no true believer will either eat, drink, smoke, bathe, or indulge in any other bodily gratification between the hours of sunrise and sunset.

The fast concludes with the appearance of the next new moon. The "faithful" go out of doors, the women to the house-tops, on the appointed day, to watch for the moon, for, until it becomes visible the fast must not cease; and if the sky be cloudy, so as to obscure the view, the fast must continue until the following night, or until the moon be seen.

The Feast of Rams, or the Greater Beiram, resembles the Jewish Passover. It commences on the 10th of Dhul'hajja, or month of the pilgrims to Mecca. The animals sacrificed must be males, if sheep or goats; but some of the poorest people killed fowls. It is absolutely necessary that the head of each family should kill at least one animal, but all who can afford to do so, kill one for each individual male member of the family.

One ram is killed at the Great Mosque. Immediately after it is struck, it is flung upon the shoulder of a man, who runs with it through the town to the house of an appointed judge, the dying animal and its bearer being pelted all the

time with stones by the street boys. If, on arriving at the judge's house, the animal is pronounced to be still breathing, it is regarded as good augury for the year; but if quite dead, it is an evil omen.

Friday, of course, is their day for religious worship, corresponding to our Sunday, and to the Jewish Sabbath. And for two ours on that day (twelve till two), gates are closed.

Education amongst them consists of learning to repeat aloud passages from the Koran; and all day long the boys may be found in school, seated cross-legged on the ground, and reciting their task in sing-song tones. Education rarely goes beyond this.

Hospitality, so necessary in countries where there are no hotels or inns, is inculcated as a high virtue in Moslem nations, and by the Moor is displayed in a way that modifies his extreme religious fanaticism. As a rule, when you have partaken of his salt, the Moor regards you as his friend. And the following beautiful apologue, from a traditional sermon of Mohammed's, shows the high favour in which charity is held.

"When God made the earth, it shook to and fro, till he put mountains on it to keep it firm. Then the angel asked, 'O God, is there anything in thy creation stronger than these mountains?' And God replied, 'Iron is stronger than the mountains, for it breaks them.' 'And is there anything in thy creation stronger than iron?' 'Yes, fire is stronger than iron, for it melts it.' 'Is there anything stronger than fire?' Yes, water, for it quenches fire.' 'Is there anything stronger than water?' 'Yes, wind, for it puts water in motion.' 'O, our Sustainer! is there anything in thy creation stronger than wind?' 'Yes, a good man giving alms; if he give with his right hand, and conceal it from his left, he overcomes all things. And every good act is charity; your smiling in your brother's face; your putting a wanderer in the right road; your giving water to the thirsty, is charity; exhortations to another to do right are charity. A man's true wealth hereafter is the good he has done in this world to his fellow man. When he dies people will ask, what property has he left behind him? But the angels will ask, what good deeds has he sent before him.'"

Hospitality and alms-giving are carried to a high pitch among the Moors. The remnants of a meal from the residence of the Governor downwards, are never put aside for future use, but

are daily distributed among the poorer neighbours, who come, at the well-known hour to receive them. And in this we are reminded of Lazarus sitting at the rich man's gate, and of the practice of Mohammed. His simple meals were always shared with those who dropped in to partake. And outside the prophet's house were always to be found a number of the poor, who lived entirely on his generosity, and were called the "people of the bench." His consideration for the poor is testified by a remarkable passage in the Koran, which originated thus: "Mohammed was once engaged in earnest conversation with Wallid, a powerful Koreishite, whose conversion he desired greatly. A blind man in very humble circumstances, Abdallah by name, happened to come up, and, not knowing that Mohammed was otherwise engaged, exclaimed, 'O, Apostle of God, teach me some part of what God has taught thee.' Mohammed, vexed at the interruption, frowned and turned away from him. But his conscience soon smote him for having postponed the poor and humble to the rich and powerful, and the next day's Sura showed that he was ready to acknowledge God as rebuking him: "the prophet frowned, and turned aside, because the blind man came to him. And how knowest thou whether he might not have been cleansed from his sins? or whether he might have been admonished and profited thereby? As for the man that is rich, him thou receivest graciously, and thou carest not that he is not cleansed; but as for him that cometh unto thee earnestly seeking his salvation, and trembling anxiously him dost thou neglect. By no means shouldst thou act thus." And, ever after this, we are told that, when the prophet saw the poor blind man, he went out of his way to do him honour, saying, "The man is thrice welcome on whose account my Lord hath reprimanded me."

In many things do the Moors resemble the Jews, in their practice of circumcision, in some of their festivals, in their abstinence from pork. Inquiring into the origin of this latter custom, I expected to be told either that it was borrowed from the Jews, or that it was an ancient custom common to the two semitic nations. I received the following story:—

A wild boar that had been slain in a hunt, was cut up and divided among the families of the small *donar* (village), near which it had been killed. One poor widow was absent at the time of distribution, and returning a little later

she found that her portion, which had been duly cut and put aside for her, had been stolen by one of her neighbours. She complained to Mohammed, who, however, was unable to restore it to her or punish the thief; but instead, pronounced a curse upon that particular portion of the flesh of the hog, both at that time, from henceforth, and for ever. As neither the widow nor any one else knew what exact bit had been cut for her (the thief, of course, would not tell.) Mahomedans have always abstained from pork, as eating it they might chance to put, as they say, "a curse into their stomachs." Rumour says that some of the very learned men have found out the exact part forbidden, and knowing which part to avoid, are able to eat the rest in safety. If so, they keep the secret to themselves.

Possibly their hatred of Christianity may be connected with the long and bitter wars with the Christians of Spain, resulting in the expulsion of the Moors from that land. But the Jews, who are very numerous in their midst, are also subjected to many disqualifications and disabilities. European influence in Tangier has modified some of these. Yet no Jew must wear a turban; and their slippers must be black, not yellow. In other cities of Morocco, a Jew on leaving the Jewish quarter must take off his shoes and walk barefoot through the filthy streets; in passing a Mosque he must remove the blue handkerchief with which the head is bound; he is not allowed to ride through the city, nor to carry arms. And yet we must remember that the Jews when cruelly driven from Christian Spain, found an asylum in this Mohammedan land, that at that time, at least they were less intolerant than the Christians.

Fanaticism and intolerance, superstition and arrogance, are the accompaniments of dogmatism and ignorance. All Christians are held as infinitely inferior to Believers, and it is only because of their close alliance with Satan, that they attain the power to do so many things unknown to the true believer.

The grossest superstitious notions prevail; and the wildest stories of supernatural agency are current, and are received with full credulity. As in some other religions it is a merit to believe, and a demerit to be sceptical. The most extraordinary fictions are received as facts, whatever is strange being accounted for as the work of djinns or evil spirits.

But it may be that these shortcomings belong rather to the people, than to the religion. At least there is something fine in the following:—"There is no piety in turning your face towards the east or the west, but he is pious who believeth in God, and the last day, and the angels, and the Scriptures, and the prophets; who for the love of God disburseth his wealth to his kindred, and to the orphan, and to the needy, and to the wayfarer, and to those who ask, and for ransoming; who observeth prayer, and that payeth the legal alms, and who is one of those who are faithful to their engagements, and patient under ills and hardships, and in time of trouble; these are they who are just, and these are they who fear God."—(Sura II. 172.)

Islam, the name which Mohammed applied to the new faith, means "resignation," or "peace," either resignation to the will of God, or the peace that results from surrender to the will of God. The relation of a Moslim to Allah, is that of a slave to his master. As compared with Christianity, and which teaches that God is as a Father to men, Islam tends to crush rather than to unfold human nature, to make fatalists rather than men looking up to and working with the Divine Father for the regeneration of the world. In its sanction of slavery, and in the position it assigns to woman, we have defects, great and glaring.

Yet it has had, and still has a mission in the world, and we in the spirit of that utterance of Jesus, "he that is not against us is for us," may becomingly recognise its work. That work evidently is to raise the oriental mind from the depths of religious darkness, to the comparative light which it can shed. Where Christianity fails to win the oriental, or the African, Mohammedanism succeeds. It seems suited to the genius of races in conditions akin to that of the Bedouin of the desert. In Sierra Leone, to take one example, there is a large Christian element, yet it is Mohammedanism, and not Christianity, that is converting the large heathen mass that surrounds it. We may well wish the work to prosper, even while with a more distant hope, we see the millions of Africa won to Monotheism, ready for a religion unadulterated by any concessions to polytheism; a religion that recognises the equality of men before God, that gives a sense of the dignity of human nature, and links man with God, not by the tie of fear, or servility as if God were a despot, but with the tie of love, as we acknowledge Him as "Our Father in heaven."

THE BELFAST UNITARIAN SOCIETY.

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